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ABSTRACT

The relationships between life style and personality, role concept, attitudes, the influence of significant others, and personal and professional choices are examined for women pursuing various life styles. College-graduated women (N=87) between ages 30 and 58 were divided into three groups based on career-home commitment. Traditionals (N=24) left work and were full-time homemakers. Neotraditionals (N=40) returned to work after a period of childrearing. Nontraditionals (N=23) combined careers and childrearing. Results from the California Psychological Inventory indicate three separate personality patterns for the three life styles and a significant relationship between life style and personality. The three groups differed substantially in personality, role concepts, attitudes, occupational choice, motivation, quality of employment experiences, parents' life styles, perception of husbands' preferred life style and sex role attitudes, own and husbands' education, and family size. Influence of parents' life style, the single most potent variable, contributed 64% of the variance to a daughter's choice of life style. Variables which remain significant when parents' influence is controlled are attitude towards college, educational level, and choice of occupation. (Author/NRB)

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LIFE STYLE:
Personality, Role Concept, Attitudes, Influences, and Choices

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Paper presented at the 87th Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association, New York, September 1979.

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Life Style: Personality, Role Concept, Attitudes, Influences, and Choices[1]

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Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationships between life style and (a) personality, (b) role concept, (c) attitudes, (d) the influence of significant others, and (e) personal and professional choices for women pursuing three different life styles: Traditional, Neotraditional and Nontraditional (see Subjects) (Ginzberg, 1966; Cooper, 1963).

The hypotheses are: (a) Neotraditional and Nontraditional women have personalities which are more dominant (Dominance), ambitious (Capacity for Status), self-confident (Self-Acceptance), achievement-oriented (Achievement via Conformance and Achievement via Independence), intellectual (Intellectual Efficiency), and self-actualizing (Psychological-Mindedness) than Traditional women; (b) Neotraditional and Nontraditional women have broader role concepts than Traditional women; (c) Neotraditional and Nontraditional women have smaller families and better educated husbands than Traditional women; (d) the significant others (parents and husbands) of Neotraditional and Nontraditional women have more liberal attitudes and life style preferences than those of Traditional women; (e) Neotraditional and Nontraditional women are better educated than Traditional women and choose more androgynous and masculine majors and occupations; (f) Neotraditional and Nontraditional women are intrinsically motivated while Traditional women are extrinsically motivated; (g) Neotraditional and Nontraditional women differ significantly from each other in personality, role concept, attitudes, the influence of significant others, and personal and professional choices.

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Subjects

Subjects were 87 middle-class, college-graduated women, wives and mothers, between the ages of 30 and 58 years (mean age = 39.4 years). Life style category was based on career-home commitment. Traditional women (N = 24) left paid employment (terminated) after marriage or the birth of their first child, were full-time homemakers and intended to remain so; Neotraditional women (N = 40) returned to paid employment (interrupted) after a period of childrearing; and Nontraditional women (N = 23) simultaneously combined a career (continuous) with marriage and childrearing (Ginzberg, 1966; Cooper, 1963). All women who were employed indicated that they would continue to work whether or not economics were a factor. Various age groups (F (2, 84) = 1.612, ns) and religious preferences (X^2 (4) = 0.103, ns) were similarly represented in each life style.

Procedure

The California Psychological Inventory (CPI) (Gough, 1956) was used to measure personality. Modified versions of the Inventory of Women's Life Styles (Ginzberg, 1966) and the Inventory of Women's Role Concept and Attitudes (O'Connell, 1974) measured life style, role concept, attitudes, the influence of significant others, and personal and professional choices. All inventories were completed anonymously. Open-ended items were scored by the author and another rater (scorer agreement was 91%; rescore reliability, 94%; ambiguous items were scored jointly).

Results

The CPI means shown in Table 1 indicate three separate personality patterns for the three different life styles and a significant relationship between life style and personality. Nontraditional women score significantly higher than Traditional women in Dominance, Capacity for Status, Self-Acceptance,

Achievement via Conformance, Intellectual Efficiency, and Psychological-Mindedness as hypothesized and also in Sociability and Social Presence. Neotraditional women score significantly higher than Traditional women in Dominance, Self-Acceptance, Achievement via Conformance, and Psychological-Mindedness as hypothesized and in Sociability. Neotraditional women are not significantly higher than Traditional women in Capacity for Status or Intellectual Efficiency. Nontraditional women score significantly higher than Neotraditional women in Dominance, Achievement via Conformance, and Social Presence. All life styles score similarly in Achievement via Independence.

Women pursuing different life styles perceive the female role in significantly ($X^2 = 17.83$, $p < .001$) different ways. Nontraditional (91.3%) and Neotraditional (60%) women are significantly more likely than Traditional women (30.4%) to perceive women's role as involving either simultaneous career and family commitments or a role specifically designed to accommodate the individual woman. Equal proportions (34.8% and 34.8%, respectively) of Traditional women perceive woman's role as focused on marriage, home, volunteer work or as involving a return to a career after childrearing. Significantly ($X^2 = 5.56$, $p < .01$) more Neotraditional (40%) than Nontraditional (8.7%) women perceive the female role as involving a hiatus in career involvement for a period of childrearing.

Traditional (70.8%) women are significantly ($X^2 = 7.78$, $p < .05$) more likely to have three or more children than Neotraditional (47.5%) or Nontraditional (30.4%) women. Nontraditional (82.6%) and Neotraditional (70%) women are more likely ($X^2 = 13.7$, $p < .001$) than Traditional women (33.3%) to be married to men whose formal education exceeded a college degree.

Traditional (66.7%) and Neotraditional (65%) women are significantly ($X^2 = 6.6$, $p < .05$) more likely to perceive their husbands as favoring a life style with a clear division, or a minor overlap, of duties and responsibilities for husbands and wives than are Nontraditional women (34.8%). Nontraditional women (65.2%) are more likely to perceive their husbands as favoring a life style with little distinction between duties and responsibilities for husbands and wives. Traditional women (50%) are significantly ($X^2 = 31.9$, $p < .001$) more likely to perceive their husbands as having attitudes which polarize male/female roles than Neotraditional (7.5%) or Nontraditional (4.3%) women. Neotraditional (57.5%) women perceive their husbands as favoring some flexibility in male/female roles; Nontraditional women (69.6%) perceive their husbands as significantly more likely to view male/female roles in egalitarian terms or based on individual preferences than Traditional (12.5%) or Neotraditional (35%) women do.

Traditional women (69.6%) are more likely ($X^2 = 6.54$, $p < .05$) to have had mothers who were homemakers while Neotraditional (63.9%) and Nontraditional (57.1%) women are more likely to have had mothers who were employed as well.

The influence of parents' life style had a dramatic effect on daughter's choice of life style. Traditional (78.3%), Neotraditional (78.4%), and Nontraditional (90.9%) women report parental influence in the direction of their present life style in response to the question, "In what way did your parents' life circumstances (such as occupation, education, social position, finances, health, divorce, etc.) affect your educational, occupational or other decisions or goals?" The responses indicate that if the daughter perceives the parents' life style positively then the influence is toward the same life style for herself; if, however, the daughter perceives the parents' life style as unrewarding then her choice is a reaction away from such a life

style. Additional analysis (multiple regression and partial correlations) of the data indicates that the "influence of parents' life style" accounts for a dramatic .64 ($r = .80$) of the variance in the daughter's choice of life style (see Table 2). However, "influence of parents' life style" may not be independent of daughter's present life style and although intriguing this finding should be viewed with caution.

As indicated in Table 2, personality, role concept, attitudes, the influence of significant others, and personal and professional choices are significantly correlated with life style. The personal and professional variables that remain significant when "influence of parents' life style" is controlled are college training, educational level, and occupational choice. Other important variables are college major, motivation, and quality of employment experience.

Specific chi square analyses of these variables indicate that Traditional women (79.2%) are more likely ($X^2 = 54.78$, $p < .001$) to report that they perceived college as contingency training (i.e., if necessary to support one's self or one's family) while Neotraditional (97.5%) and Nontraditional (100%) women are more likely to report that they perceived college as career training. Consistent with these divergent attitudes towards college training, Neotraditional (65%) and Nontraditional (82.6%) women pursue graduate education significantly ($X^2 = 20.1$, $p < .001$) more often than Traditional (20.8%) women. During their college years, Traditional (66.7%) and, contrary to expectations, Neotraditional (82.5%) women choose feminine college majors and later are employed in feminine occupations (97% and 85.5%, respectively). In contrast, Nontraditional women choose androgynous or masculine majors (56.5%) and are employed in androgynous or masculine occupations (65.2%). (Examples of feminine, androgynous, and masculine majors are education, psychology, and mathematics,

respectively; examples of feminine, androgynous, and masculine occupations are elementary school teacher, journalist, and accountant, respectively.)

Traditional women (54.2%) are significantly ($X^2 = 31.79$, $p < .001$) more likely to be extrinsically motivated (i.e., to report the most gratifying aspects of (past) employment as earning a salary, good working condition, and/or amiable colleagues); Neotraditional (70%) and Nontraditional (73.7%) women are more likely to be intrinsically motivated (i.e., to report the most gratifying aspects of (past and present) employment as a sense of accomplishment and achievement). Approximately one-fourth of Neotraditional (27.5%) and Nontraditional (26.1%) women report both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. Perhaps not coincidentally, Traditional women (66.7%) describe the quality of their employment experiences as negative or mediocre while Neotraditional (92.5%) and Nontraditional (100%) women describe the quality of their experiences in positive terms ($X^2 = 35.4$, $p < .001$).

In addition, as shown in Table 2, the variables relating to a husband who is a professional or an executive, a husband who approves of his wife's career, and a woman's positive attitude toward women's liberation are significantly and positively correlated with nontraditional life styles. Although "influence of parents' life style" has the most significant impact on daughter's choice of life style in this analysis, college training, educational level, and own and husband's occupation are also significant when "influence of parents' life style" is controlled. Motivation, employment experience, college major, attitude toward women's liberation and husband's view of women's role, his approval of his wife's career, his education and preferred life style approach significance while the impact of personality variables diminishes.

Discussion

This study indicates that there are very clear relationships among life

style, personality, role concept, attitudes, the influence of significant others, and personal and professional choices. The most meaningful of these relationships seems to be the influence of parents' life style on the daughter's life style. The data on parents' life style indicates a strong modeling effect but also indicates that other dynamics may be operating. A daughter's choice of a life style different from that of her parents might be a reaction away from her parents' example and influences both when she chooses a more, or less restrictive life style for herself. It might be a self-reported behavioral statement relating to the inappropriateness of her parents' life style for herself. Or perhaps a different choice is a response to the present range of alternative life styles, a desire for personal fulfillment, and preparation for, and encouragement toward, such a life style. Women today may be reaping the rewards of a happy match between opportunities, propensities, and personalities.

The data distinguish three separate personality patterns for Traditional, Neotraditional, and Nontraditional women. Nontraditional women are more dominant, ambitious, self-confident, achievement-oriented, intellectual, self-actualizing, and socially poised than Traditional women and more dominant, achievement-oriented, and socially poised than Neotraditional women. Neotraditional women are more dominant, self-confident, achievement-oriented, self-actualizing, and socially poised than Traditional women. These three patterns seem to be compatible with, and reflective of, the life styles chosen by the women.

The data also indicate that women pursuing different life styles perceive the female role in significantly different ways and that Traditional and Neotraditional women's concepts of the female role are generally less restrictive than the life styles they pursue. For these women, there seems to be at least

attitudinal acceptance of a female role involving greater latitude and diversity. This movement is also seen in the women's perceptions of their husband's attitudes on male/female roles. The concept Nontraditional women hold of the female role and their perception of their husbands' attitudes are consistent. The responses of these Nontraditional women indicate that they choose (or are chosen by?) husbands who are (or have become) well-educated professionals or executives, husbands who not only approve of their wives' careers but who share with them an egalitarian view towards woman's role and a preference for an egalitarian life style.

This study consistently delineates three life style patterns. The Traditional women not only give highest priority to marriage and childrearing, but report attitudes, motivation, and personal and professional choices which support that life style. The Neotraditional women see home and career commitment as a sequential pattern that can only be integrated when children are school age or older. Their attitudes, motivation, and personal and professional choices straddle the Traditional and Nontraditional positions. For example, while they have a unique personality pattern and a definitive role concept, they choose feminine majors and occupations like Traditional women, but pursue graduate education, are intrinsically motivated, and report positive employment experiences like Nontraditional women. The Nontraditional women, in contrast, not only see integration of marriage, childrearing, and career commitments as feasible, they see them as consistently desirable. Their attitudes, motivation, and personal and professional choices reinforce this position. This research extends previous findings (e.g., Tangri, 1972) on the relationships between life style, motivation, and choices of college major and occupation, and defines the relationship between life style and the quality of employment experiences.

This study also extends the findings of other researcher on the relationship between mothers' employment and career salience in married women (e.g., Bielby, 1978) and the findings on the relationship between life style and personality, role concept, size of family, husband's education, and attitudes of significant others (e.g., Clarkson, Vogel, Broverman & Broverman, 1970; Farley, 1970; Gysbers, Johnston & Gust, 1968; O'Connell, 1977; Weil, 1961). But perhaps, most importantly, this study points to the tremendous impact of the influence of parental life style on the choice of life style for the women in this sample.

In sum then, this study indicates that a woman's personality, role concept, attitudes, parental life style and influence, personal and professional choices, and perception of husband's life style preference and attitudes are significantly related to her own life style. These data help us to profile women leading different life styles but, more importantly, bring us one step closer to answering the question, "Why does one married woman choose a Traditional life style, another a Neotraditional, and a third a Nontraditional life style?" Although other factors are involved, the answer seems related to a woman's personality and identifications, her socialization, and her structuring of reality.

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Table 1

CPI Means and Levels of Significance for Traditional, Neotraditional, and Nontraditional Women

Personality Trait[a]	Life Style		
	Traditional[b]	Neotraditional[c]	Nontraditional[d]
Dominance***	27.5***	31.4*	34.0*
Capacity for Status	21.3*	22.1	23.4
Sociability***	23.8***e	26.8*e	28.4
Social Presence***	33.6***e	36.2	40.5*e
Self-Acceptance**	20.4**	22.3*	23.4
Sense of Well-Being	36.8	38.9	38.9
Responsibility	34.5	34.2	33.0
Socialization	39.7	38.4	38.8
Self-Control	33.1	33.6	32.5
Tolerance	24.8	25.8	25.1
Good Impression	17.4	19.9	20.1
Communality	26.0	25.6	26.1
Achievement via Conformance***	27.8***	30.3*	32.7
Achievement via Independence	23.8	23.5	23.4
Intellectual Efficiency*	40.6**	42.5	43.5
Psychological-Mindedness**	12.1***	14.0**	14.3
Flexibility	10.5	11.5	10.2
Femininity	24.7	23.6	23.1

*p < .05 **p < .01 ***p < .001

[a] Asterisks in this column denote levels of significance in one-way analysis of variance for the three life styles.

[b] Asterisks in this column denote levels of significance in Scheffe's comparisons of means between Traditional and Nontraditional women.

[c] Asterisks in this column denote levels of significance in Scheffe's comparisons of means between Traditional and Neotraditional women.

[d] Asterisks in this column denote levels of significance in Scheffe's comparisons of means between Nontraditional and Neotraditional women.

[e] Levels of significance in Scheffe's a posteriori comparisons of means; other Scheffe comparisons are a priori.

Table 2

Life Style: Relationships Between Zero Order Correlations and Selected Partial Correlations Controlling for Influence of Parents' Life Style

	Correlations	
	Zero Order	Partials
Influence of Parents' Life Style	.80***	
College Training	.56***	.30**
Educational Level	.52***	.33***
Occupation	.51***	.24*
Motivation	.53***	.17[a]
Employment Experience	.44***	.18[a]
College Major	.36***	.17[a]
Self: Woman's Role	.32***	.10
Women's Liberation	.29***	.15[a]
Husband's View of Woman's Role	.47***	.15[a]
Husband For/Vs. Wife's Career	.42***	.19[a]
Husband's Education	.40***	.17[a]
Husband's Preferred Life Style	.29**	.16[a]
Husband's Occupation	.22*	.20*
Social Presence	.42***	
Sociability	.37***	
Achievement via Conformance	.36***	
Self-Acceptance	.25**	

[a] $p < .10$ *$p < .05$ **$p < .01$ ***$p < .001$